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VII

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, AND CLAN

The Members of the Family

THE Orokaiva family is a well-defined group under the immediate authority of the father (*mama*). When (as in the usual instance) it is monogamous, its members live under one roof, and the father and mother clear and cultivate one area of ground, with what help their children may be fit to give them. The family group is therefore in large measure self-supporting and in its internal affairs may also be called independent. The father is master of his wife and children, and if he thinks fit may chastise them without interference from fellow villagers. This is natural enough, as the wife, under normal patrilocal conditions, is a stranger. An instance such as the following is not uncommon. A man named Tiembo set off to the garden accompanied by his wife, his two young daughters, and his dog. The dog set upon a neighbour's pig, and Tiembo, a fond parent but a very excitable man, set upon his wife and elder daughter and thrashed them for not minding the dog. The girl, in a mixture of anger, grief, and indignation (a peculiarly native frame of mind called *sisira*) absented herself from home for two days, and the wife in a huff delayed the cooking of her husband's dinner that evening. But all were very soon reconciled, and the villagers were no more than tickled by the whole affair. Such an instance shows that it behoves the father to practise restraint (which indeed he usually does), but it also illustrates his unquestioned authority over his own family. In this he is backed up by his clan, among whom the wife is virtually a stranger. Indeed, one may doubt whether the severest punishment inflicted upon the stranger woman would arouse anything more than passing disapproval in the clan and village of the husband. On one recent occasion a man of Deunia who had killed his wife in a fit of temper, fled for his life instead of surrendering himself to the village constable. He gave himself up at the first

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opportunity to another constable, a good many miles distant. The reason for his flight was simply that his wife belonged to his own village and to the clan of its constable, so that he feared a too summary punishment. Had this murder occurred before the country was brought under control, one might venture to say that the murderer would have had the actual support of his own clan against that of his wife if a violent retaliation had been attempted. As a rule, however, the Orokaiva is fond of his wife and indulgent to his children. Squabbles do not often occur; too frequent wife-beating is deprecated; and bad temper is regarded as bad conduct.

The Position of Women. The wife and mother is largely occupied with matters of *ménage*, and takes little part in wider social activities. Completely overshadowed by the male she seems very well satisfied with her relative unimportance. A woman takes no initiative in matters which concern the clan as a whole, though, when a number of clans are together at a festival and feeling is perhaps strained, she is sometimes known to blow upon the coals. She has a weapon, the *poreha* or quarterstaff, and in former times would sometimes accompany cannibal raids, acting the part of armour-bearer or assisting in the commissariat.

In private life she is not aggressive, although I may quote a rather striking exception in order to prove the rule. A man named Siavije, having no children by his first wife, married a second, who was compelled, however, to reside in her own village nearby because of the jealousy of the senior wife. Under these circumstances Siavije hardly dared visit his second spouse, and was constantly involved in quarrels with his first. Being an inoffensive man and rather small, he was hardly a match for this large raw-boned woman who was known to worst him on more than one occasion and even to pursue him, crying for help, from end to end of the village.

Polygamy is relatively uncommon. In most of the instances which have come under my notice the wives manage to get on successfully enough with one another, though it is frequently said to be otherwise. I know of one man who 'threw away' his first wife because she could not live in

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614 *The Clan Spirit.* It remains to say something of the clan spirit. The earlier part of this chapter dealt with the immediate family which was described as in large measure self-supporting and in its internal affairs independent. The family group is a definite social entity within a larger entity, the clan.

614 593 It does not often happen that the two interests, that of the clan and that of the family, come into conflict; but when they do it remains uncertain which takes precedence. It is largely a question of whether a man should place the interests of his wife before those of his kinsmen. Under normal conditions of peace the family of the husband remains on excellent terms with that of the wife, though in earlier days, when marriage by capture was common, the matter was not always so simple. The case in which the captive wife, with the connivance of her husband, warned her people of an impending raid illustrates how the conflict might arise. I may give a definite instance in which a man chose to cleave to his wife rather than his kinsmen. A very old man of Bologasusu named Bearivu was formerly married to a woman of the Aiga people on the right bank of the Kumusi. In an inter-clan fight these people killed some men of Bologasusu. This left Bearivu in a very uncomfortable predicament, for he feared that his clansmen would take an easy revenge by killing his wife, who was of a kin with the raiders. He accordingly migrated and settled with his wife's people on the other bank of the Kumusi. In due course the retaliatory raid was made, and Bearivu fought against his own clan in defence of his wife's. When the woman died Bearivu changed his coat, returned to his clan, and in subsequent encounters fought in turn against the people of his late wife.

But under ordinary circumstances we do not find the husband's people at variance with those of his wife, as if he should be pulled in different directions. When he takes a wife she is economically absorbed into his clan, and her life in all important respects belongs to that clan; and he by certain elaborate precautions, of which name-tabus are an instance, takes care to remain on good terms with his rela-

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tives by marriage. Save for any untoward happening, therefore, the life of the family will fit into that of the clan.

It is only necessary to stress the point that the immediate family is recognized as a social unit; and the mere fact that a man sometimes quarrels with the members of his clan and migrates with his family or settles somewhere apart, proves that the family interest may compete with that of the clan. Both units are co-operative, the family especially in respect of the food quest, the clan in respect of ceremonies and feasts, and more importantly of fighting. The clan owns the garden land, but the family cultivates its own patch and reaps its own harvest. On the whole, since the clan displays a constant tendency to split into smaller groups of which the family is the nucleus, it is difficult to draw a line between the two. Yet for the same reason we may be right in saying that the family, as the indivisible unit, exerts the stronger hold.

Whatever the difficulty of deciding between these two, however, there can be no doubt that both of them, family and clan, mean more to the individual than does the tribe or the somewhat loose confederacy of clans within the tribe. A man's strongest sympathies certainly lie within the limits of the clan. Quarrels between families, i.e. within the clan, are inevitable, but they are easily adjusted. Not so the quarrels between clans themselves—land disputes and the like—which are prosecuted with great bitterness. Indeed, as sorcery cases show, it is almost invariably the stranger beyond the pale of the clan who is suspected. Any one within the clan is presumably a friend; any one without it is a potential enemy.

There is another kind of group-spirit with which the clan may have to contend, viz. that of locality. Once more the two are not frequently opposed. Often the village is occupied wholly by one clan, and in such a case the conflict could not arise. But when representatives of one clan (A) live in the village of another clan (B) (although the *modus vivendi* is usually satisfactory), there may arise the situation in which the clan (A) as a whole falls out with the clan (B). Witnesses have commonly assured me that a man would stand by his

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rushing to the scene. On the whole we may say that the Orokaiva seldom fails in this duty of helping the members of his group.

A passive virtue, yet one which possibly ranks first in Orokaiva estimation, is that of *good temper*. I find no specific term for it, but the good-tempered man is called simply *javo-embo*, or 'good man'. A squabbler, a vituperator, or a bully is strongly disliked, and since it is these very propensities—even that of mere vituperation—which bring credit to a man when he directs them against the outsider, we see at once a contrast between intra-group and extra-group morality. A man of anger is *tumo-buso*, which could be said to mean literally 'liverish', but which in actuality implies something more fiery than mere crabbiness. A man is *jujuno-buso* if he is given to verbal quarrelling, and *embogi-buso* if he be an actual brawler. Such a one was Buninia, who some fifteen years ago was a noted warrior among the Aiga. With his great size and prowess a fierce temper combined to make him almost a terror to the neighbourhood. As a warrior he was named as particularly *sarika*; but his offensives were not always directed towards the legitimate enemy. He had stolen pigs and fought with neighbours in near-by villages, so that he is nowadays remembered as a strong man but a bad one. But usually there is very little that resembles bullying in a native village. To force a man to do one's will by personal violence is a thing that hardly enters the native's mind; and when a fisticuffs occur—which in fact is seldom—one ventures to believe it is only in the heat of anger. Between husband and wife it is somewhat different: a man may thrash a neglectful spouse in order to give her a better idea of her duties, though the corrective aspect is probably not very prominent when a man is belabouring his woman in a rage. All informants have agreed upon the justifiability of wife-beating, but they have all agreed that there are proper limits, and an habitual wife-beater has a bad name. I have seen children smacked, but never chastised, and would venture to say that when children are beaten it is only in anger and not with any cool intention of punishing them or improving them. I remem-

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child's teeth tickled her in their tentative exploring. All these mothers laughed at the infants, with comments signifying, " He is not content to drink my milk ; he wants to eat me, too."

When the baby learns to walk, even if he is still unsteady on his feet, he ceases to be *meni orosati* and is known as *meni isapa* until he is about eight or nine years old. He stays at home with his older siblings while his mother goes to the garden, but she does not stay there all day now. She leaves the village quite early in the morning and returns to prepare a midday meal. As soon as the child is able to walk with his mother without impeding her progress, he goes to the garden with her. As he grows older, he plays with the other children in the gardens and may help his mother a little. Children of two or three years eat solid foods, mainly taro, but they still suckle. If they hang around their mother, except to approach the breast, she scolds them and makes them go away. Sometimes, if she is busy or does not want to sit down, she refuses them the breast. They go to their father, who spends much of his time sitting on the ground talking with the other men. The father takes the child between his legs, delouses his head affectionately, and holds him in his arms. It is always to the father that the child, especially the male child, runs for comfort.

The *meni isapa*, particularly at the age of two or three years, are the butt of jokes from the grown men, who frighten them by making strange noises and lungeing threateningly in their direction then laughing loudly as they watch the children cry, register bewilderment and run to their fathers. When their initial terror is overcome, the children learn to laugh at their own fright. This happens continually, until the child learns not to be afraid, imitates the men's frightening noises and grins back at them cheekily. All this is accepted by the women, who make no attempt to shield their children from experiencing such frights. If the men are her kinfolk, or friends of her husband or brother, the mother will join in with their raucous laughter. If they are strangers, she will take no notice of the incident. This frightening of small boys (*meni isapa*) is deliberate. Sometimes little girls are frightened incidentally at the same time, but no one takes much notice of this. Men do not go out of their way o frighten the little girls.

From about nine years till initiation at fifteen or sixteen, the child is known as *meni dombo*, or " big boy " (female, *meni kakara dombo*). I know very little about the *meni dombo*, either male or female. Married women among the Orokaiva are alarmed by the behaviour of the *meni kakara dombo*, who approach men casually to demand cigarettes and to talk freely about sexual matters in a joking way. This suggests that parents probably exercised more control in former times over the older children.

In Orokaiva childhood there are at least two conflict situations. At teething, the infant learns that he must not bite the mother's breast. Biting is accorded the immediate punishment of physical blows and unfeeling laughter at the child's expense. A three years old boy wanted to suckle and was kept waiting by his mother, who told him that she was busy and that he was getting too old to suckle anyway. He retaliated by biting her breast, but she hit him, scolded him and chased him away,